



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

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Memorandum

TO: MTC Advisory Committee Members

DATE: September 9, 2004

FR: Connie Soper

W. I.

RE: Task Force Recommendations: Proposed Transportation 2030 Input

Over the past few months, the Access to Mobility Task Force has met four times to provide input to MTC staff in shaping the message for Transportation 2030 specific to those whose mobility options are limited because of age, disability, or income status. The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize these efforts, and to invite your comments on these draft materials.

The key outcomes emerging from the task force's work include:

1. Clarification of an over-arching goal of "Access to Mobility" for MTC's Transportation 2030 plan to address the needs of individuals facing mobility barriers due to age, disability, or income status; with specific articulation of findings and recommendations for low-income individuals captured under the heading of "Lifeline Transportation".
2. Program Principles to guide further studies, investment priorities and coordinated actions among transportation providers, social service agencies, community interests and others in identifying and implementing improvements to serve the needs of these individuals.
3. Specific recommended strategies for MTC and its partners to undertake in the short or longer-term.

In order to provide clear direction and standing for the Task Force's work, MTC has synthesized the details of these three points in fact sheet/action platforms to be adopted by the Commission as part of its Transportation 2030 Plan. Once adopted, they will provide the foundation for continued work that to be pursued beyond the plan's completion. The attached draft platforms embody the above points; note that a specific sheet has been prepared for "Lifeline" issues to underscore the distinctive steps targeted to low-income populations. Program principles are specifically outlined, and an array of recommendations forwarded by the task force are captured under "program issues" or "call to action" lists—the latter focusing on short-term actions that should receive priority attention.

We welcome your comments on this draft; please email your comments to me at csoper@mtc.ca.gov. Comments received on or before **September 17** will be considered for the revised graphics-formatted version to be included in the overall draft Transportation 2030 Plan to be released for public comment in late October. Should you have any questions, please contact me at (510) 464-7746.

Access to Mobility

Introduction

The ability to get to a job, school, medical appointments, recreational sites and other essential destinations is a key component to a good quality of life. The Bay Area enjoys an extensive array of public transit services and programs intended to address the needs of all Bay Area residents; however, some low-income populations, people with disabilities and frail elderly people lack the mobility they need to travel to work, school, medical services, shopping, recreation, community centers and other destinations. For these people, transportation improvements are needed to provide better mobility options, and implementation of the best solutions will require the joint efforts of regional and local stakeholders.

In December 2003, MTC adopted a new goal of “Access to Mobility” in recognition of those whose transportation options are limited due to age, disability, or income status. Subsequently, MTC staff convened a Task Force comprised of representatives from transit agencies, community-based organizations, advocacy groups and other stakeholders to discuss how best to plan for and address the needs of these constituents. As a starting point to help guide future discussions, the Task Force developed the following Purpose Statement, Statement of Desired Outcomes, and Program Principles.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Access to Mobility Program is to stimulate the implementation of creative, collaborative, cost-effective transportation solutions. These strategies should produce customer-oriented services that meet the specific needs of individuals facing mobility barriers due to age, disability, or income status.

Desired Outcomes

The primary desired outcome for the Access to Mobility Program is for improved mobility for low-income persons, older adults, youth, persons with disabilities and those without access to automobiles through expanded services that are convenient, safe, accessible to and from key destinations, and affordable.

Program Principles

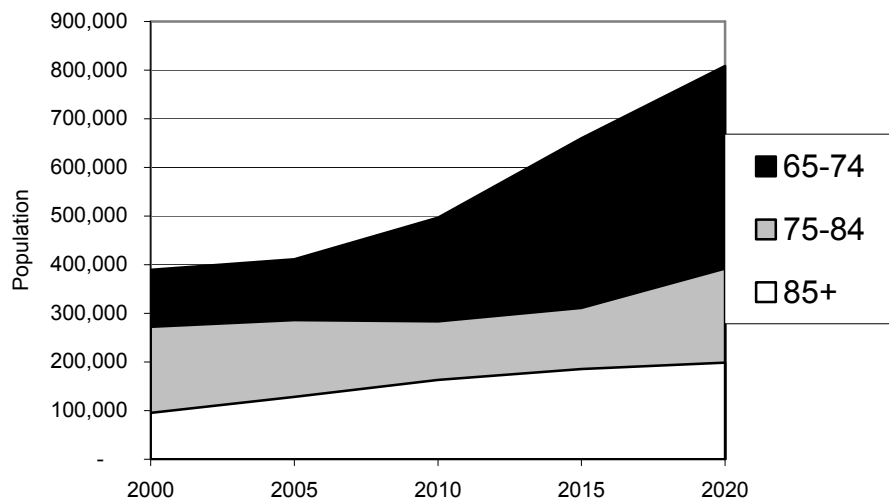
- *Use ongoing planning efforts to document needs, establish goals and objectives, prioritize solutions, quantify program/project costs and evaluate results.*
- *Promote innovative and flexible transportation solutions that are appropriate to the specific needs of each target group.*
- *Enhance coordination among transportation and social service agencies in order to recognize a shared responsibility in providing transportation for low-income persons, seniors, and persons with disabilities.*
- *Link mobility service improvements to ongoing regional transportation and land-use planning efforts.*
- *Pursue increased funding for transportation services intended to benefit persons with mobility limitations.*

This program addresses the following groups:

Older Adults

Currently, persons aged 65 and older account for about 10.5 percent of the region's population. Over the next 20 years, this group will increase by 84 percent. As people age, they increasingly face limitations that prevent or make difficult their ability to drive or use fixed-route transit. The number of people age 85 or older, the group with the most severe mobility problems, will grow by 108 percent by 2030.

Bay Area Senior Population Growth Projections, 2000-2020

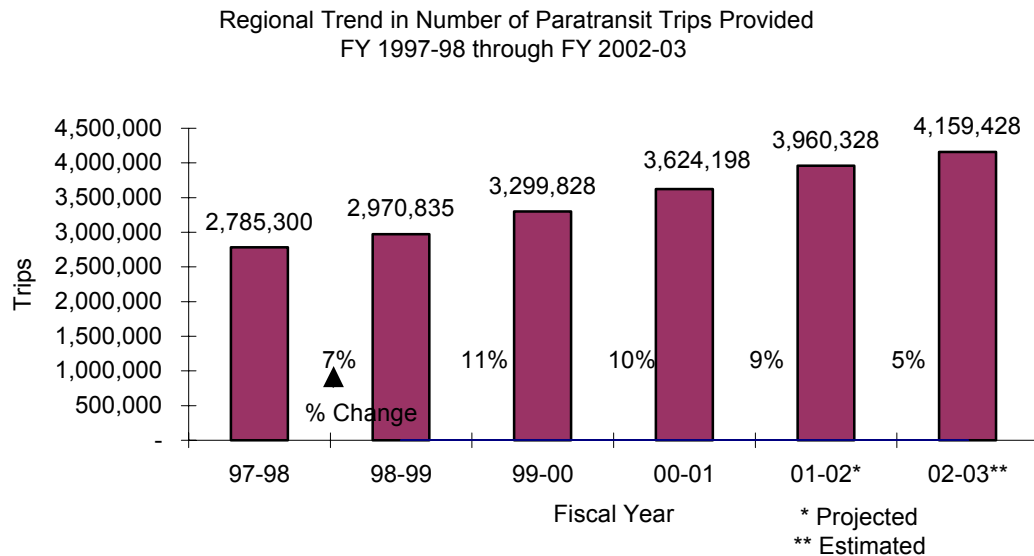


In 2002, MTC completed the *Older Adults Transportation Study* to examine the demographic changes the region faces with respect to our aging population, and to engage stakeholders in identifying ways to remove transportation barriers. A resulting regional mobility strategy calls on MTC to support ongoing and long-term advocacy, planning and funding needed to remove these impediments. Transit agencies, cities, counties and other local jurisdictions also play key roles by supporting improvements to land-use patterns, educating seniors about safe driving, promoting highway and road improvements, developing and implementing pedestrian safety measures, improving public transit services to better accommodate older adults, and funding innovative transportation solutions.

Persons with Disabilities

Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, transit agencies and local jurisdictions have taken steps to ensure their services and programs are accessible for persons with disabilities. The ADA also requires that transit agencies provide paratransit service that is complementary to its fixed route service for persons

whose disability prevents use of fixed route. In all nine Bay Area counties, public paratransit programs have greatly expanded since full compliance was achieved in 1997, and are likely to increase even more as the population ages.



Youth

School-provided bus services have all but vanished in the last 30 years in the Bay Area. While public transit agencies in the region have attempted, with varying success, to fill this school transportation gap, the decline of the “yellow school bus” is creating serious problems for parents, children, communities, schools and transit agencies.

Bay Area children and their parents often face difficult mobility barriers in arranging for transportation to school, child-care services, jobs and recreational activities. The proximity of the child care system—featuring mostly small-scale providers spread throughout residential neighborhoods—often results in complex, time-consuming trips for families that rely on public transportation, and increased driving demands on parents with cars. The need to provide safe, convenient and affordable transportation for children to and from child-care has emerged as key in welfare-to-work and other related planning studies.

Low Income

The Commission highlighted the needs of low-income individuals to be addressed in a targeted strategy for “Lifeline Transportation.” (see accompanying fact sheet/action plan for these findings and recommendations).

Program Issues

1. The provision of transportation for low-income persons, youth, seniors and persons with disabilities is often a shared responsibility among transportation and social service agencies. Many state and federally funded programs provide transportation

for low-income persons, seniors and persons with disabilities, including health, job-training and senior programs. Removal of institutional, regulatory and funding restrictions could promote enhanced coordination among the various entities, thereby gaining more productivity out of each dollar spent.

2. Land-use decisions need to support the development of additional affordable housing near transportation services, and consider how to improve access to essential destinations, such as grocery stores, day care centers, medical offices, etc. When new social service facilities are sited, agencies need to consider their accessibility by public transit, as well as bicycle, pedestrian, wheelchair and auto access.
3. Additional planning is needed in order to quantify transportation needs and service shortfalls for these groups so that planners, practitioners and policy-makers can make informed decisions based on quantifiable data and relevant demographic information. Taking these steps will allow for the establishment of clear goals and objectives for each group, and to define desired outcomes, performance and evaluation objectives.

Call to Action: Potential Strategies and Actions

- Seek legislative and/or regulatory changes at the State level to address key barriers to coordinated transportation programs, (e.g. cost and difficulty for providers and/or low-income persons to obtain insurance, funding restrictions specific to state or federal programs, lack of available data on transportation expenditures by social service agencies, etc.)
- Continue efforts to advocate for regulation changes that will allow the use of Medicaid dollars to offset the costs of providing non-emergency medical trips
- Encourage regional Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) and Housing Incentive Program (HIP) applications to address specific mobility barriers faced by persons with disabilities and/or older adults.
- Ensure that regional and local bicycle/pedestrian planning efforts consider and fund projects to make paths of travel to fixed route transit services accessible and usable by older pedestrians and/or persons using wheelchairs or other mobility aides.

Lifeline Transportation Program

Introduction

During Phase I of Transportation 2030, \$216 million was set aside to create a regional “lifeline” transportation program for residents of low-income communities. Efforts to advance transportation improvements for low-income communities are intended to address gaps identified from the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), which concluded with Commission’s adoption of Lifeline Transportation Network Report. That report identified existing transit routes most critical to meet the needs of low-income neighborhoods; at the time the report was completed, nearly half (43%) of all transit routes operated by 19 transit operators within the region were identified as Lifeline routes. The report identified gaps—both spatial and temporal—that prevent full access to services that people need, and recognized that solutions to address these gaps need to be developed and planned for at the local level, and may consist of a wide variety of transportation solutions beyond traditional fixed route transit, based on those most appropriate to the community’s needs.

MTC has taken the following steps to advance the region’s understanding of transportation issues specific to low-income communities:

Community-Based Transportation Planning Program

Both the Lifeline Transportation Network Report and the Environmental Justice Report for the 2001 RTP recommended initiation of community-based transportation planning as a first step to address gaps and barriers faced by low-income communities. MTC initiated this program in 2002, and to date, five such plans have been completed. Led by county congestion management agencies (CMAs) in consultation with community-based organizations and MTC, the plans also inform county transportation decisions, including transportation sales tax expenditure plans.

Potential transportation improvements are identified to address gaps specific to each low-income community. Solutions may include expanding fixed-route transit, children’s shuttles, vanpool services, car share or other auto-related projects. In some cases, new capital improvements such as bus stops, benches, shelters or other enhanced amenities are called for.

Graphic:

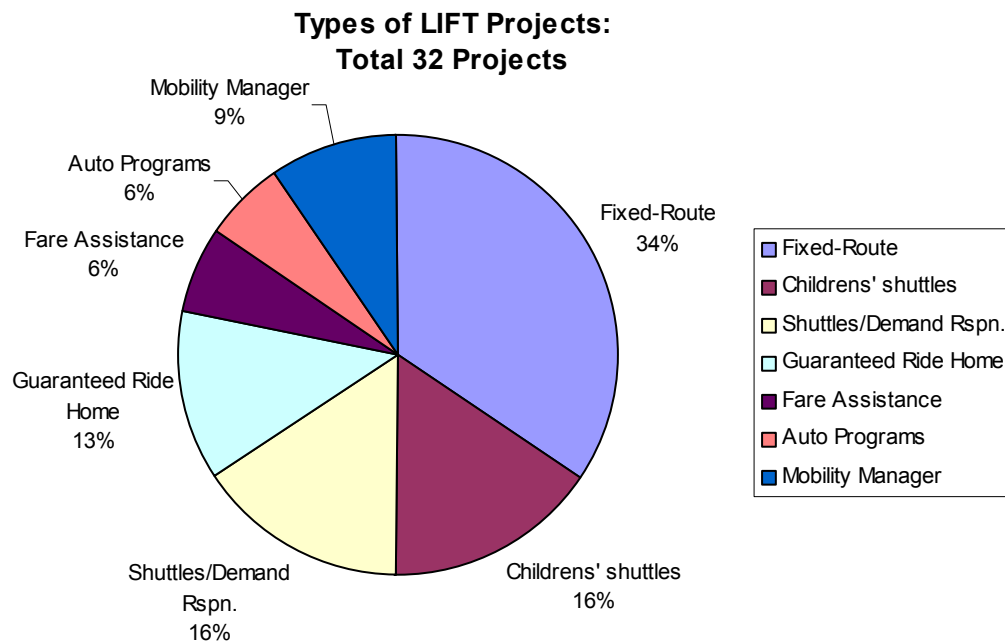
Map of Communities of Concern/Overlay with CBT Plans Completed/Future Plans

LIFT (Low Income Flexible Transportation) Program

Recognizing that there is no *one* solution to filling the gaps in the existing transportation network for low income communities, the LIFT program provides funding to support a wide range of transportation services. LIFT funds have been used create new and expanded public transit services, children’s shuttles, auto-loan programs, rideshare activities and guaranteed ride home programs.

The LIFT Program began in 2000 and has been funded with a variety of federal, state, and local transportation dollars, as well as additional social service matching funds, bringing the total investment for this program to nearly \$21 million. To date the LIFT program has provided support to 32 non-traditional and creative transportation solutions in all nine Bay Area Counties.

The LIFT program encourages a collaborative approach to addressing the transportation challenges faced by the working poor. Transit providers work closely together with social service agencies, community based organizations and other key stakeholders to make a difference in the lives of Bay Area low-income residents.



Transportation Spending Study

The cost of transportation is often a significant barrier for low-income individuals in getting to school, work or other essential destinations. MTC and the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) collaborated to study travel patterns and transportation costs for low-income persons of employable age for work and training purposes. The report, *Transportation Spending by Low-Income California Households: Lessons for the San Francisco Bay Area* was published under the auspices of PPIC in July 2004, and identified the following key findings:

- Transportation is the third-largest budget item for low-income households in California's metropolitan areas.
- Low-income households allocate a slightly smaller proportion of household expenditures to transportation than do other households.
- Cost appears to be a barrier to vehicle ownership among low-income households in the Bay Area.

- Cost is unlikely to be a barrier to transit use for most low-income households but may be a barrier for some.
- Low-income commuters are less likely than other workers to drive alone and more likely to carpool, walk, or travel by bus.
- Low-income workers have somewhat shorter commute times than other workers.

Program Issues

1. Additional community-level planning is needed in order to quantify transportation needs and service shortfalls for low-income residents so that planners, practitioners and policy-makers can make informed decisions based on quantifiable data and relevant demographic information. Taking these steps will allow for the establishment of clear goals and objectives for the region's investments, and to define desired outcomes, performance and evaluation objectives.
2. Over the next few months, recommendations will be forged with respect to use of the \$216 million dedicated for lifeline services. MTC and program stakeholders need to also consider strategies, such as requiring matching funds, to grow the program. In addition, guidelines should be established to improve project sustainability by determining how most effectively to build long-term commitments using the seed money from LIFT and other funding programs.

Call to Action: Potential Strategies and Actions

- Complete all 25 Community-Based Transportation Plans (CBTPs). These plans use a community-based process in low-income areas to identify transportation needs and potential solutions.
- Ensure that needs assessments and recommended strategies emerging from key regional and local planning efforts are included in local sales tax programs and other appropriate local planning/funding efforts.
- Require that land-use strategies developed by CMAs (T-Plus Plans) address low-income transportation planning issues, including the linking of affordable housing to transit facilities.
- Advocate for site-specific transportation services for low-income populations to be included in the design and funding of housing and commercial development projects.
- Advocate for increased federal JARC funds distributed to states on a formula basis.